



Inside CFSA



For Our Child-Serving Community

February 20, 2004
Volume 3, Number 2

Court Monitor Reports Laud CFSA Improvements

On February 12, 2004, Court Monitor Judith Meltzer delivered three reports about CFSA to the U.S. District Court, marking the first assessment to Federal Judge Thomas F. Hogan of CFSA's progress against standards in the court-ordered Final Implementation Plan. The reports show that CFSA has made significant progress in many key areas while still needing to improve in others. The reports include:

- a review of (202) 671-SAFE, CFSA's 24-hour hotline for reporting child abuse and neglect in the District;
- findings from the first-ever round of Quality Service Reviews that looked at the effectiveness of case practice, and
- progress on June 30 and Sept. 30, 2003, benchmarks in the final Implementation Plan.

"We're excited about this good news but must maintain the momentum of change," said CFSA Director Olivia A. Golden. "Percentage goals in the Final Implementation Plan climb steadily over the next three years."

Hotline Review

The hotline review looked at policies, procedures, and operations. The report notes unification of abuse and neglect investigations under CFSA in 2001, as a major accomplishment. It also notes that:

- From Aug. 2002 through July 2003, the hotline received an average of 612 calls per month.
- An average of 32 percent of investigations were substantiated for child abuse or neglect, consistent with national experience.

Among areas needing improvement, CFSA must enhance the screening process for calls that require information/referral rather than investigation; provide more training opportunities; and increase supervisor review of decisions to screen out calls.

Quality Assurance Review (QSR)

CSSP, other national experts, and CFSA selected 40 diverse cases from CFSA and provider agencies that have case management responsibilities. Interviews with key stakeholders in each case resulted in 38 "case studies" that indicate the quality of CFSA case practices in improving safety, permanence, and well being for children and families.

The report provides a baseline for future measurement of quality of practice and services. In particular, it notes that with only one exception, every case had an assigned social worker who was knowledgeable about the case, which is a "significant improvement from past practice." Among areas for improvement, CFSA needs to clarify performance goals and time frames for stability and permanence, pursue better record-keeping on dynamics of cases, and enhance skills of workers in assessment and case planning.

Implementation Plan Benchmarks

This report covers benchmarks for June and September 2003. Of 15 outcome measures, CFSA achieved 13 (87%). Of 35 implementation strategies, CFSA completed 24 (69%) and is making progress on the remaining 11.

Among numerous achievements, five stand out as direct improvements to the safety and well being of abused and neglected children.

- **Individual Caseloads:** For the first time in the history of the Court's oversight of CFSA, average caseloads have been reduced to less than 20 per worker.
- **Case Plans:** Against a goal to have a case plan for 60 percent of foster-care cases, CFSA achieved 61 percent. This is a 144 percent improvement over CFSA's baseline performance of 25 percent three years ago.
- **Visits:** The goal for monthly visits to children in foster care was 50 percent. CFSA achieved 54 percent, up from five percent less than three years ago.
- **Licensing:** CFSA has fully implemented District safety and other standards for licensing of group homes and independent living programs serving children and youth. The goal was to license 80 percent of these facilities. CFSA has licensed 100 percent.
- **Young Children in Congregate Care:** CFSA continues to move away from reliance on group care for young children. Against a goal of no more than 65 children under age 12 in congregate care, CFSA had only 47. In October 2002, we had 95. ■

CFSA Public Information faxes this newsletter monthly to providers and other partners. To provide comments or to update your fax number, call (202) 442-4246. Editor: Niki Mitchell. ■